OFFICE OF THE MERIT COMMISSIONER

Province of British Columbia

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2002/2003 Annual Report

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OFFICE OF THE MERIT COMMISSIONER

2002/2003 Annual Report

Province of British Columbia

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OFFICE OF THE
MERIT COMMISSIONER

The Honourable Claude Richmond
Speaker
Legislative Assembly of British Columbia
Victoria, B.C.
V8V 1X4

Sir:

I have the honour to transmit herewith the 2002/2003 Annual Report of the Office of the Merit Commissioner to the Legislative Assembly, to be laid before the Assembly in accordance with the provisions of section 5.2 of the *Public Service Act*. This report is for the period from April 1, 2002 to March 31, 2003.

Respectfully submitted

Vince Collins
Merit Commissioner

Victoria, British Columbia
May 2003

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OFFICE OF THE
MERIT COMMISSIONER

From The Merit Commissioner

Government's Strategic Plan outlines a significant shift in the way public services are to be delivered within a fiscal environment that requires less spending and greater efficiency. In anticipation of the most dramatic restructuring in the history of the public service and the implementation of the Core Program Review and budget reductions, Government established the Office of the Merit Commissioner in 2001 to fulfill their commitment to restore and rebuild a strong, professional, vibrant and non-partisan public service.

Under legislation passed in 2001, the Merit Commissioner is responsible for overseeing the application of the merit principle in the B.C. public service. It is my privilege to be the first Merit Commissioner for British Columbia. In this capacity I am a Legislative Officer and report directly to the Legislative Assembly.

The role of the Merit Commissioner is to monitor appointments to, and from within, the public service to ensure that they are based on merit – that people appointed are qualified and competent to do the job with no regard to political or other affiliation.

To achieve this vision, I am responsible for conducting random audits of appointments to assess whether:

- the recruitment and selection processes are properly applied resulting in appointments based on merit, and
- the individual, when appointed, possessed the required qualifications for the position.

The results of the individual compliance audits are reported directly to the deputy ministers or heads of government organizations.

In fulfilling my responsibility for overseeing merit,
I undertook to assess the attitude of the public service respecting the application of the merit principle in the first year of my appointment as Merit Commissioner. The survey results were reported in my first Annual Report in 2001/2002 and were to be used as a benchmark to test changes in public service attitudes and perceptions towards the application of the merit principle over time.

On August 27, 2001, the Legislative Assembly passed legislation amending the Public Service Act to establish the Office of the Merit Commissioner.

The Merit Commissioner is appointed by the Lieutenant Governor and Council for a three-year term on the recommendation of the Legislative Assembly. The Legislative Assembly may only recommend an individual unanimously recommended by a special committee of the Assembly.

The current Commissioner of the Public Service Employee Relations Commission assumed the position of the Merit Commissioner. This ensured the smooth, efficient and timely introduction of the office of the Merit Commissioner. The next Merit Commissioner will be appointed according to the prescribed process.

The Merit Commissioner must report annually to the Legislative Assembly concerning the Merit Commissioner's activities under the Act since the last report was made.

This past year has involved some very large changes and reductions in the Government's workforce. It has been an unsettling time for many public servants. It has also been a time in which the normal hiring and appointment process within the public service has been significantly altered to accommodate the huge workforce adjustments taking place. These adjustments have resulted in large numbers of public servants being placed directly into positions as provided for under collective agreements and as provided for in the Government's human resource policy.

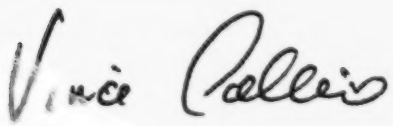
A competent, professional and non-partisan public service which is committed to the fundamental values inherent in the public service as a whole – impartiality, fairness, transparency – remains the vision of all British Columbians..

The workforce adjustment process has meant that the normal competitive hiring and promotion system has, in many cases, been suspended in favour of directly placing employees into vacant positions in order to secure their employment status.

Given these exceptional circumstances, I decided to delay the second merit survey. I did not believe that a survey of a workforce in significant transition would be effective in assessing changes from the first survey conducted in January 2002. As the workforce adjustment process comes to a conclusion in the current fiscal year, I intend to again survey the public service's perceptions of the merit selection process as more normal circumstances resume. While the survey was not undertaken, random audits of appointments were completed and the results are summarized in the following report.

A competent, professional and non-partisan public service which is committed to the fundamental values inherent in the public service as a whole — impartiality, fairness, transparency — remains the vision of all British Columbians. The Merit Commissioner plays an important role in supporting the practical application of this vision by providing oversight to the application of the principle of merit in public service appointments.

This is the second annual report produced by the Office of the Merit Commissioner and it covers the activities of the office from April 1, 2002 to March 31, 2003.



Vince Collins
Merit Commissioner

Victoria, British Columbia
May 2003

Public Service Staffing System — Accountabilities

Public Service Employee Relations Commission – responsible for staffing in the public service and sets staffing policies and procedures.

Ministries – responsible for staffing activity the Commissioner of the Public Service Employee Relations Commission delegated to the ministries.

Public Service Appeal Board – responsible for hearing appeals from the public service employees who were unsuccessful applicants for public service jobs and who believe that the merit principle was not applied.

Merit Commissioner – responsible for providing systemic oversight respecting the application of the merit principle in the British Columbia public service.

Corporate Overview — Office of the Merit Commissioner

Vision — a professional and non-partisan public service

Mission — to serve the people of British Columbia and the Legislative Assembly by monitoring Public service appointments to ensure the application of the merit principle

Principles — The Merit Commissioner will operate in a manner consistent with the following principles:

- Fairness and impartiality
- Personal and managerial independence
- Confidentiality
- Accountability to the Legislative Assembly and British Columbians

Key Responsibilities — to achieve this vision and meet our mandate, the Office of the Merit Commissioner will:

- Monitor the application of merit by conducting audits of public service appointments
- Undertake special reports of "merit performance reviews" of system-wide issues respecting the application of the merit principle
- Report at least annually to the Legislative Assembly on the application of the merit principle in public service appointments
- Prepare and distribute surveys to assess the attitude of public service employees towards the application of the merit principle in the public service

The Merit Principle in the Public Service

Last year the B.C. Government embarked on a strategy to renew and revitalize its public service. An important element of this renewal and revitalization of the B.C. public service was a goal to recruit and select a professional, competent public service. This included developing a simplified merit based staffing process. Its stated purpose is to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of the human resource system and its ability to attract and retain qualified employees.

Over the past year, a review of the Government's staffing policy has been completed, and a new simplified merit-based process implemented.

Merit has been the foundation value of the British Columbia public service for almost 100 years and has developed, over time, into the concept that appointments must be made on the basis of a person's fitness and ability to perform the duties of the position.

The B.C. Government continues to monitor changes being implemented in other public service jurisdictions around the world. Many of the changes impact the B.C. public service. Of particular interest are the changes taking place at the federal level in Canada. The proposed *Public Service Modernization Act* (Bill C-25) contains revisions to the existing *Public Service Employment Act*. Of particular interest is how merit is defined and applied under this Bill.

The merit system continues to be viewed as the foundation of a competent, professional, non-partisan public service that has served the people of Canada well for almost a century.

The merit system, however, is seen as more than the merit principle itself. It includes a commitment to fundamental values that are inherent in the public service as a whole: impartiality, fairness, equitable treatment and transparency.

Under the proposed federal legislation, merit has two parts. Appointees must be qualified and the operational requirements and organizational needs of the department identified by a manager must be considered in the selection.

Everyone who is appointed will have to meet the essential qualifications for the work. The ultimate choice of who is selected for appointment will be based on the operational requirements and the organizational needs that the manager has identified.

The Bill effectively balances the discretion granted to deputy heads to establish factors that will be considered in determining merit with a strong role for the Public Service Commission to set the framework that will guide the decision-making process. Aspects of the Bill will safeguard merit and guide its application. The legislation will also prohibit political influence in appointments and provide an informal review process that can address concerns with the selection process.

Over the past year, a systematic review of the B.C. Government's staffing policy and process has been completed. As changes are implemented the results of this work will be monitored closely and will be of considerable interest to this Office.

Year in Review

Merit Compliance Audits

The Audit Process

The Merit Commissioner legislation requires random audits of appointments to, and from within, the public service. The audits assess:

a) whether the recruitment and selection processes were applied properly, resulting in appointments based on merit, and
b) that the appointed individuals possess the required qualifications for the position.

The audit process is based on professional audit standards and methodology to ensure the necessary level of rigor and objectivity in assessing the application of merit. Accordingly, the Internal Audit and Advisory Branch of the Office of the Comptroller General was contracted to assist in designing and developing a program to review completed competition files. This program was used to conduct the 2002/2003 audits. An overview of the audit process and program is appended. This overview can also be found on the Office of the Merit Commissioner website at www.gov.bc.ca/meritcomm/.

To obtain an unbiased picture of the proper application of merit across the public service the appointments selected for audit are both random and representative. Appendix C is a current report of the "Random Selection of Cases for Merit Compliance Audits".

Audit Results

For 2002/2003, 30 appointments in 12 Ministries or Agencies were audited.

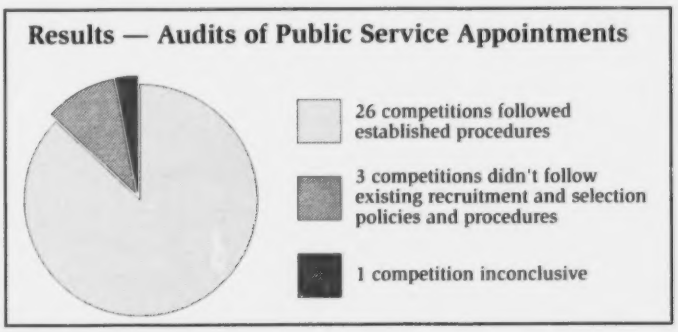
Of the 30 appointments audited, 93% were appointments of existing public service employees and 7% were new hires to government. 74% of competitions were restricted to existing public service employees and 26% were open to both public service employees and the public.

Of 30 appointment audits conducted, 26 followed established recruitment and selection policy and procedure, three were flawed and one was inconclusive.

Of the 30 audits conducted, I concluded that 87% (26 competitions) properly applied the established recruitment and assessment processes. Of the remaining audits:

- 10% (three competitions) did not follow existing recruitment and selection policies and procedures, and
- in 3% (one competition) it was not possible to conclude whether merit had properly been applied

In spite of these findings, no evidence was found that any of the individuals identified in my audits were unqualified for the position to which they were appointed or that there was any evidence of impropriety in their selection. Rather, my audits found in the instances above, that errors occurred in the administration of the selection process to an extent that I was unable to conclude that the appointments were based on merit.


Results — Audits of Public Service Appointments
26 competitions followed established procedures
3 competitions didn't follow existing recruitment and selection policies and procedures
1 competition inconclusive

Year to Year

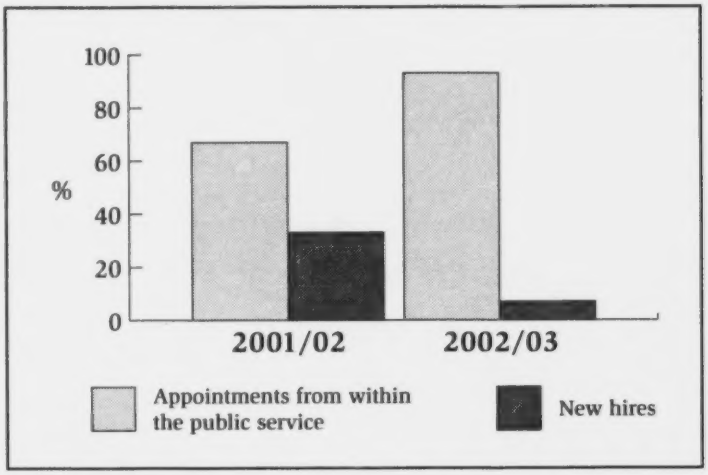
Comparisons 2001/2002 and 2002/2003

In 2001/2002, 67% of the appointments were public service employees and 33 % were new hires to government. This has significantly changed in the current year with 93% being appointed from within the public service and only 7% new hires to government. This change reflects the current workforce adjustment initiatives of government as a whole, wherein existing surplus employees are being placed as the first priority when recruitment opportunities are identified.

The Ministry of Children and Family Development lead in the total number of appointments overall for both years. The largest number of appointments in a geographic area remains in Victoria with 52% this period as compared to 44% the previous period.

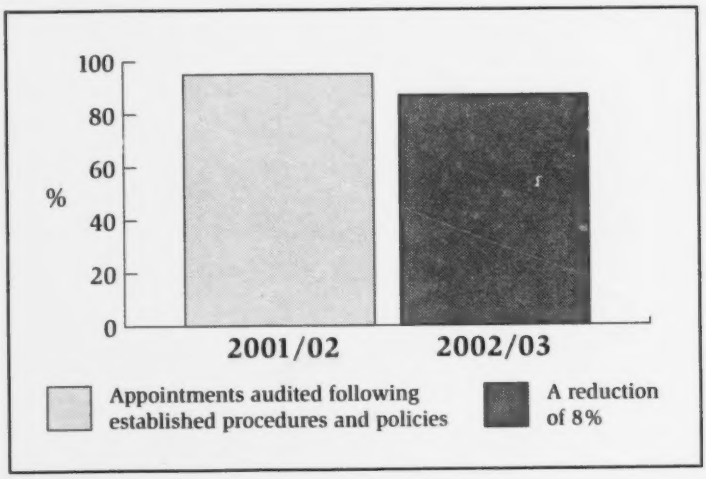
In the previous year, 93% of the appointments were into regular positions with only 7% temporary appointments for longer than seven months. The current report shows a somewhat different distribution as 69% of the appointments are into regular positions and 31% to temporary positions. This again appears to be reflect the ongoing workforce adjustment initiatives across government.

As noted earlier, in 87% of the appointments audited for the purposes of this report, the established recruitment and assessment processes were properly applied. This compares to 95% in the previous year, a reduction of 8%.



Any drop in compliance against the established recruitment standards is cause for concern.

My concern however, is tempered in part by the sample size and by the lack of established performance norms for public sector recruitment. Without information on merit recruitment performance from other jurisdictions, it is difficult to gauge the benchmarks by which British Columbia's public service recruitment performance should be assessed. This topic will be explored by the Merit Commissioner's Office. The Government's central human resource agency is encouraged to consider establishing performance targets for public service recruitment.



Even though performance norms or benchmarks are not yet established, all public service executives are urged to ensure that those employees engaged in the recruitment processes are adequately trained in applying merit-based recruitment standards. Ideally, every selection process reviewed would meet the test of merit compliance. While perfection may be elusive, the pursuit of full compliance must be a priority to ensure public confidence in the Government's hiring practices.

Appendices

Appendix A — Assessing the Use of the Merit Principle: The Audit Process and the Audit Program

Appendix B — Copy of Merit Audit Program

Appendix C — Random Selection of Cases for Merit Compliance Audits – B.C. Stats Report

Appendix A

Assessing the Use of the Merit Principle

The Audit Process and Audit Program

1.0 INTRODUCTION:

1.1. What is the purpose of the merit principle?

The merit principle is designed to ensure that the best person is hired for a position. "Merit" means that an assessment is made which is free of patronage and based on competence and ability to do the job.

The *Public Service Act* requires that all appointments to and within the public service be based on the principle of merit unless the appointment is specifically exempt under Section 10 of the legislation.

The Public Service Employee Relations Commission (PSERC) has developed detailed policies for selection and recruitment that promote the use of merit for all eligible public service competitions. The policy is available for viewing at http://www.pserc.gov.bc.ca/policies/policymanual/

1.2. Why audit completed job competitions?

In August 2001, amendments to the Public Service Act created the Office of the Merit Commissioner with the responsibility to monitor eligible public service appointments and report on whether the merit principle was properly applied. The legislation requires the use of random audits of appointments to and from within the public service to assess whether the appointments are based on merit and whether the individuals appointed possess the required qualifications for the position to which they were appointed. The use of an audit process brings rigour and objectivity to the assessment of whether merit was applied.

1.3. What is an audit?

An audit is an examination, which compares evidence of performance against predetermined criteria, with the goal of verifying and reporting the performance or results. The auditor is required to gather enough supporting and independent evidence in sufficient detail to support their conclusion. To ensure that files selected for audit are identified at random, the file selection process is done with the assistance of BC Stats using a mathematical sampling technique.

1.4. How will results from audits be reported?

The Merit Commissioner will report audit results to Deputy Ministers or other persons having overall responsibility for the ministries, boards, commissions, agencies or organizations audited.

An annual report will also be made to the Legislative Assembly. The report to the Legislative Assembly must not disclose:

- personal information, as defined in Schedule 1 of the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*, relating to individuals who applied for or were appointed to positions in the public service, or
- the identity of persons who participated on behalf of the ministries, boards, commissions, agencies or organizations, as the case may be, in the selection of the individuals appointed to positions in the public service.

1.5. What happens if an audit determines that the merit principle was not applied?

The Merit Commissioner is not responsible for investigating individual competitions or hearing complaints or appeals respecting the competition process. Appeals respecting the competition process continue to come under the authority of the Public Service Appeal Board. The Merit Commissioner will only review appointments after the recruitment and selection process, including appeals, is concluded.

The purpose of the audits is to determine and report on whether the merit principle was applied and whether a person(s) has the required qualifications for the position to which they were appointed. The audits will not comment on whether a competition process should be overturned in cases where the merit principle was not applied.

2.0 THE AUDIT PROGRAM

2.1. What is the audit program?

It is a step by step guide for the review of a competition file. By completing the audit program, an individual will systematically assess information on the file and any additional information provided by panel members or human resource advisors. This systematic review leads to a conclusion on whether the merit principle was applied and whether a person possessed the required qualifications for the position to which they were appointed.

2.2. What is the goal of the audit program?

The goal is to determine whether the actions taken in the competition process were reasonable and consistent with the use of the merit principle. The audit program only reviews information that is relevant to making a reasoned decision on whether merit was or was not applied.

2.3. What is the relation between the audit program and PSERC policy?

The audit program is only concerned with the steps in a job competition process that are directly relevant to assessing whether the merit principle was applied. The purpose of the audit is not to determine whether every aspect of PSERC recruitment and selection policy was followed.

However, there are certain PSERC policies that are fundamental to a merit-based process. For example, Appendix 7 of the PSERC Policy Directive 4.1 sets out the documentation that must be retained in a job competition file. This information is directly relevant to any assessment for the use of the merit principle.

2.4. Does each step in the audit program have to be followed in sequence?

No. What matters is that all the sections of the audit program are completed before any conclusions are made about whether merit was or was not applied. The sequence of the program is designed to minimize the number of times that file documentation is handled.

This makes it easier and less time consuming to complete the audit program.

2.5. Does the audit program allow for creativity in the selection process?

Yes. The program provides space for the auditor to describe the process followed and any exceptions. The audit considers whether all applicants were assessed against the mandatory selection criteria using a process that was fair and consistent. While it does not assume that all competition processes will be structured the same way, it does assume that competitions will have certain aspects in common. This includes but is not limited to: job descriptions; a statement of mandatory selection criteria; consistent and accurate job posting information; a consistently administered process that assesses candidates' experience, education, knowledge and skills in relation to (at a minimum) mandatory selection criteria, and clear and properly communicated selection decisions.

Appendix B

Merit Audit Program

BRITISH COLUMBIA Ministry of Finance Internal Audit & Advisory Services

MEMORANDUM

December 4, 2001
File No.: 2247

To: Vince Collins
Merit Commissioner
Office of the Merit Commissioner

From: Dan Ho
Director, Operations
Ministry of Finance

Subject: Merit Audit Program

We have completed the development of the audit methodology for completed job competition files. We have attached the final merit audit program and draft outline for reports to ministries and the legislature.

The program addresses your audit responsibilities under the Public Service Act. Specifically:

"5.1 (1) The Merit Commissioner is responsible for monitoring the application of the merit principle under this Act by:

(a) conducting random audits of appointments to and from within the public service to assess whether:

- the recruitment and selection processes were properly applied to result in appointments based on merit, and
- the individuals when appointed possessed the required qualifications for the positions to which they were appointed, and

(b) reporting the audit results to the deputy ministers or other persons having overall responsibility for the ministries, boards, commissions, agencies or organizations, as the case may be, in which the appointments were made.

5.2 (1) The Merit Commissioner must report annually, no later than May 31, to the Legislative Assembly concerning the merit commissioner's activities under this Act since the last report was made under this section."

Our office developed the audit methodology with the assistance of your staff as well as input from a focus group comprised of human resource professionals and line managers from various ministries.

The specific steps included:

- developing and field testing a preliminary merit audit program;
- facilitating a focus group discussion on the audit program and process;
- revising the merit audit program based on feedback and field testing experience;
- training the Director, Audit and Compliance, Office of the Merit Commissioner in conducting merit audits; and
- carrying out a portion of the current year's merit audits with the Director, Audit and Compliance.

BC Stats also participated in the development of the program's sample selection and sampling methodology.

Office of the Merit Commissioner staff will conduct the audits. The issues encountered in each audit will require a significant degree of judgment to assess their impact on the application of the merit principle. The staff members conducting these audits must have extensive training and experience in the human resource field to deal with the subject area issues as well as knowledge of audit methods. Our office will continue to be available for consultation, advice and training. We recommend that a periodic quality assurance review be carried out on the program to ensure consistency and assess whether issues warrant adjustments to the program.

If the audit program is carried out as designed, we believe that the auditor will examine and obtain sufficient appropriate evidence to form and support an opinion on the application of merit. The results of these audits will allow the Merit Commissioner to reasonably conclude and report on whether:

- the recruitment and selection processes were properly applied to result in appointments based on merit, and
- the individuals when appointed possessed the required qualifications for the positions to which they were appointed.

Limitations:

The audit program is designed to gain reasonable assurance rather than absolute assurance over past events. The audit program is not designed to uncover collusion involving all panel members, a purposeful manipulation of competition file documents or determine the intent behind any misapplication of merit.

We would like to thank you and the Director, Audit and Compliance for your assistance in completing this assignment.

Dan Ho
Director, Operations
Ministry of Finance

Enclosures

COMPETITION # _____ Auditor's initial: Date:

OBTAIN THE ORIGINAL FILE FOR THE HIRING PROCESS UNDER REVIEW THEN COMPLETE THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS

1. JOB DESCRIPTION	**Yes**	**No**
a) Is a job description on file?	☐	☐
b) Is there a statement of qualifications on file?	☐	☐

2. SCORE SUMMARIES

a) Is there a summary list of all applicants on file?	☐	☐
b) Is there a comparative summary showing the results of the screening process?	☐	☐

If yes, include summary with audit evidence. If no, please give details:

c) Is there a comparative summary of the scores — from every step of the process — for each candidate who passed **beyond** the screening process?	☐	☐

What evidence supports this finding? Include this evidence in the audit file.

3. POSTING INFORMATION

a) Is it clear from the web posting and any other posting information on file that applicants had access to information on the mandatory selection criteria?	☐	☐

What evidence supports this finding?

b) Do the posted selection criteria match the selection criteria attached to the job description?	☐	☐

If no, what are the specific differences?

c) Are the qualifications advertized in the posting reflective of the duties of the job description?

4. SCREENING PROCESS

a) Were all the applications received tracked and accounted for?	☐	☐

What evidence supports this finding?

COMPETITION # _____ Auditor's initial: Date:

4. SCREENING PROCESS (cont.)	**Yes**	**No**
b) Were all applicants screened according to the same **mandatory** criteria and process?	☐	☐
What evidence supports this finding?		
c) Were equivalencies acceptable?	☐	☐
d) If yes, did the screening process take account of candidate's equivalencies?	☐	☐
e) From the screening records on file:	☐	☐
How many candidates met the mandatory criteria?	_____	
How many candidates did not meet the mandatory criteria?	_____	
f) Did the panel revise any screening criteria after the competition closed?	☐	☐
If yes, please give details:		
g) If candidates who met the **screening** criteria withdrew or were deselected by the panel before the next phase of the selection process, is there a reasonable basis for the decision?	☐	☐
What evidence supports this finding?		

5. Select a judgmental sample (suggest 5-15%) of the applications that were screened out and check whether any of these candidates met the mandatory criteria used for screening.

Findings:

COMPETITION # _____ Auditor's initial: Date:

To answer the following parts of the audit program, select the file documentation for the successful candidate(s) and all candidate(s) placed on any eligibility list, plus the highest ranked unsuccessful candidate and a candidate with a mid-range score.

6. TESTS, INTERVIEWS AND OTHER ASSESSMENTS	**Yes**	**No**
a) COMPLETE THE ATTACHED AUDIT WORKSHEET (AWS).		
b) When considered as a whole, have the tests, interviews and other assessments administered to candidates addressed all the mandatory selection criteria?	☐	☐
What evidence supports this finding?		
c) For all tests, interviews and other assessments, were there minimum acceptable standards (scores/ratings) to determine that a candidate met the mandatory criteria?	☐	☐
What evidence supports this finding? (including panel notes)		
d) Were all tests, interviews and other assessments scored consistently?	☐	☐
What evidence supports this finding?		
For example: — Compare scoring to the marking key — Compare scoring between candidates		
e) Do the test scores assigned to candidates match the scores on the final rating sheet?	☐	☐
If no, give details of the discrepancies:		

COMPETITION # _____ Auditor's initial: Date:

7. SELECTION DECISIONS	**Yes**	**No**
a) Did the panel correctly assign points for years of service? (if applicable)	☐	☐
Did any errors influence the final ranking of candidates?	☐	☐
b) Were reference checks done at some step in the hiring process for all candidates who were offered the position(s)?	☐	☐
c) Were the reference checks assessed consistently according to criteria relevant to the job?	☐	☐
What evidence supports this finding?		
d) Has any error in scoring tests, interviews, years of service calculations, or reference checks affected the outcome of the competition?	☐	☐

8. REFER TO THE DOCUMENTATION FOR THE SUCCESSFUL CANDIDATE(S) AND ANY CANDIDATES PLACED ON AN ELIGIBILITY LIST:

Does the file documentation confirm that each of these candidates:		
a) Applied for the job within the timeline for applications?	☐	☐
b) Were eligible applicants?	☐	☐
c) Were made an offer as per policy?	☐	☐
d) Where a candidate declined an offer, were made offers in order of eligibility?	☐	☐

If the answer is "no" for any of the above, please give details:

9. REGRET LETTERS		
a) Were regret letters sent to all candidates who should have received a regret letter?	☐	☐

COMPETITION # _____ Auditor's initial: Date:

10. APPEALS **Yes** **No**

a) Was the competition appealed? ☐ ☐

b) Was the appeal due to failure to apply the merit process? ☐ ☐

c) Was the appeal successful? ☐ ☐

11. CONCLUSIONS Yes No

a) Does the file documentation indicate that the merit principle was applied? ☐ ☐

What evidence supports this finding?

b) Does the file documentation indicate that the candidates who were offered the position had the required qualifications? ☐ ☐

What evidence supports this conclusion?

12. ANY FOLLOW-UP REQUIRED?

FOLLOW-UP

Date Completed

13. OTHER COMMENTS

Name of person(s) who completed this Audit Program

Name: Judi Pringle — Office of the Merit Commissioner

Phone: 250 387-3908

Date:

COMPETITION # _____ Auditor's initial: Date:

AUDIT WORKSHEET (To be completed as part of Section 6 of the Audit Program)

(See reverse side for instructions)

MANDATORY SELECTION CRITERIA	ASSESSMENT PROCESS
PREFERRED SELECTION CRITERIA	ASSESSMENT PROCESS

AUDIT WORKSHEET — INSTRUCTIONS

1. In the left-hand column, list all the mandatory and preferred selection criteria from the web posting as well as any additional criteria listed in the statement of selection criteria attached to the formal job description. Place one criterion per line.

2. Review all tests, interviews, reference questions and other assessments used as part of the selection process. Determine how each of the mandatory selection criteria was assessed and place this information in the right-hand column next to the relevant mandatory criterion. If a specific selection criterion was missed by any tests, interviews, reference questions and other assessments enter "Not Assessed" in the right hand column next to that criterion.

   EXAMPLE: Here is a hypothetical statement of qualifications from a Job Posting:

   "Diploma, certificate or program completion in computer science and at least three years of related experience in business and systems analysis. Basic knowledge of computer systems design. Knowledge of relational database concepts. Excellent technical writing skills."

   Assume that the information in the job competition file shows that the panel used education (Diploma, certificate or program completion in computer science) as a basis for screening the applicants. The panel also used experience to screen applicants and later asked the preferred candidate's references about the preferred candidate's actual experience. The panel assessed "basic knowledge of computer systems design" in the oral interview and tested for "knowledge of relational database concepts" as part of a written test administered to all short-listed candidates. The panel did not test to determine whether each candidate had excellent technical writing skills and did not ask references whether the candidate possessed this skill.

Using the above example, the audit worksheet for this competition file would be completed as follows:

MANDATORY SELECTION CRITERIA	ASSESSMENT PROCESS
EDUCATION	
Diploma, certificate or program completion in computer science	Assessed during the Screening Process
EXPERIENCE	
At least three years of related experience in business and systems analysis	Assessed during the Screening Process Reference Check — Question(s) # _____
KNOWLEDGE	
Basic knowledge of computer systems design	Oral Interview — Question(s) # _____ Reference Check
Knowledge of relational database concepts.	Written Test — Question(s) # _____
SKILLS	
Excellent technical writing skills	Not Assessed

Ministry Audit Report

I have conducted _____ random audits of _____ appointments to and from within the public service by the Ministry of _____ for the period from _____ to _____. This included a review of the documentation of _____ applicants to assess whether the recruitment and selection processes were properly applied to result in appointments based on merit and that the individuals appointed possessed the required qualifications for the positions.

Based on my audits:

☐ I conclude that the merit principle was duly applied in all cases.

☐ I conclude that the merit principle was applied with some exceptions as noted below.

☐ I cannot determine whether the merit principle was duly applied.

☐ I conclude that the merit principle was not duly applied.

Comments:

_____

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_____ _____

Signed Date

Report to the Legislature

In accordance with Section 5.1 of the *Public Service Act* (R.S.B.C. 1996) I have completed _____ random audits of _____ appointments to and from within the public service for the period from _____ to _____. This included a review of the file documentation of _____ applicants for competitions held in _____ different Ministries.

I have assessed whether the recruitment and selection processes were properly applied to result in appointments based on merit and that the individuals appointed possessed the required qualifications for the positions.

I conclude that the merit principle was duly applied and that individuals appointed possessed the required qualifications in _____ of the _____ competitions reviewed.

I also offer the following comments and recommendations:

_____

_____

_____

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_____ _____

Signed Date

Appendix C

Random Selection of Cases for Merit Compliance Audits

Random Selection of Cases for Merit Compliance Audits

Prepared by BC STATS for the
Office of the Merit Commissioner

March
2003

Ministry of
Management Services

BC STATS

BACKGROUND

The office of the Merit Commissioner was established by legislation in August 2001. Under this legislation, the Merit Commission is responsible for performing audits of public service appointments, as part of a program of monitoring the application of the merit principle across government. The results of audits will be reported to senior management in ministries and other organizations covered by the *Public Service Act*. In aggregate, the results will also be communicated to the legislature as part of the annual report of the Commissioner.

The audits are designed to assess whether recruitment and selection practices have resulted in appointments based on merit, and whether individuals possess the required qualifications for the position to which they were appointed. This requires a close study of the details of each appointment by an expert in the recruitment and selection process.

BC STATS has undertaken to ensure that the selected cases are both random and representative. This paper describes the appointments that have taken place in the past year, and explains the method that was used to make an audit selection from these appointments.

APPOINTMENTS 2002

Appointments were selected based on the 2002 calendar year. In this year 1,835 appointments were made. Order-in-Council (OIC), transfers, auxiliary appointments, and temporary appointments of less than seven months are not covered in this study.

The appointments spanned 168 job titles in 36 ministries and public service organizations. The most common job titles were "Management Level 05" and "Management Level 04" with 117 and 92 appointments respectively. In fact, Management Level positions, ranging from 1 – 12, comprised 26.5% of all appointments in 2002.

Ministries with the highest number of appointments, collectively comprising 51.2% of all 2002 appointments include:

- Children and Family Development (15.8%),
- Attorney General and Treaty Negotiations (11.9%),
- Human Resources (8.6%),
- Public Safety and Solicitor General (7.9%), and
- Provincial Revenue (7.0%).

Over 70% of appointments occurred in the Lower Mainland or on Vancouver Island. Victoria alone accounted for 47.8% of all appointments in 2002.

RANDOM SELECTION OF CASES

The objective of the Merit Commission study is to sample all new appointments in order to obtain an unbiased picture of recruitment practices in the public service. This objective requires a random sample to effectively and efficiently monitor application of the merit principle in public service recruitment.

Within the objective of selecting a random sample, it is also important to ensure that the sample is representative of the actual population. Appointments can be categorized by classification, ministry or organization, location, ministry size, whether permanent or temporary

exceeding seven months, and by whether employees are new hires or internal. See the section entitled "Distribution of Audits" for comparisons of all 2002 appointments and the sample selection.

The number of audits that can be performed in respect to the time available each year is approximately 30. As a result of this relatively small number, it is impossible to guarantee that all of the various categories of appointments can be matched from the audit selection methodology to the actual population. Consequently, three categories were selected as being of greatest importance:

- Ministry size (large or small),
- Appointment status (permanent or temporary exceeding seven months), and
- Employee type (new hire or internal hire).

Ministry size was based on total regular employment at the start of the study period. Ministries were deemed large or small with a cut-off of employment numbers at 1,000.

A 2x2x2 matrix was built to reflect the number of possibilities in each of the above three categories, providing us with 8 "cells" into which appointments can be sorted. However, there were no new hires in temporary appointments category, leaving six active cells.

To select the cases for audit, each of the 1,835 appointments was allocated to one of the eight cells. The number of audits within each cell was calculated as the overall selection ratio of (30/1,835) multiplied by the number of cases in the cell. The result of this calculation was rounded up to the next single digit (e.g. 5.25 = 6). This number of cases was then obtained from each cell by sorting in a purely random order and selecting the required number sequentially.

In summary, random sampling was used to ensure broadly based auditing of all appointments. Sampling independently in the above mentioned categories ensures correct proportional coverage of large and small ministries; permanent and temporary appointments; and new hires versus internal appointments. As a result, the chance of audit is identical for each and every appointment, while the correct proportion of audits remains guaranteed in the most important categories.

DISTRIBUTION OF AUDITS

The following four tables show how the audits are distributed according to various characteristics of appointments. The first three tables cover the categories that used in sample stratification, the final table referring to a characteristic that was not explicitly controlled. In all cases, percentages were rounded to the first decimal place, and sum to 100%. Due to the size of the sample, the movement of even a single audit from one category to another can change the sample percentages significantly. However, the match between the sample percentages and the corresponding percentages among all appointments is quite close, indicating that the sample is reasonably representative of the whole.

Audits by Ministry Size

Ministry	Percent of all appointments	Number of Audits	Percent of all Audits
Large	**67.5%**	20	66.7%
Small	**32.5%**	10	33.3%

Audits by Appointment Status

Ministry	Percent of all appointments	Number of Audits	Percent of all Audits
Permanent	69.4%	21	70.0%
Temporary	30.6%	9	30.0%

Audits by Employee Type

Ministry	Percent of all appointments	Number of Audits	Percent of all Audits
New Hire	7.7%	2	6.7%
Internal	92.3%	28	93.3%

Audits by Location

Ministry	Percent of all appointments	Number of Audits	Percent of all Audits
Victoria	52.2%	13	43.3%
Other	47.8%	17	56.7%

USES AND LIMITATION OF AUDIT RESULTS

The appointments selected for audit are a random and reasonably representative sample of all appointments in 2002; thus, the audit selection is unbiased in regards to sampling framework. However, this sample is not necessarily generalizeable due to the small size and the possibility of chance.

This means that should the audit process uncover any problems with the way appointments are awarded; this sample should not be used to attribute the same proportion of problems onto the actual population. For example, if the audit process discovers problems with 30% of appointment awards, one cannot necessarily say that 30% of the appointments in the actual population will be problematic.

However, if the audit process discovers that there are no significant problems with the way appointments are awarded, then it is reasonable to conclude that there are very few problematic appointments in the actual population.

In other words, this sample is unbiased and representative of the actual population, but if problematic appointments are found, a larger sample size would be necessary to determine the actual number of problematic appointments in the overall population.